



Critique of the Gotha Programme

The main text download, linked below, which is Marx's **Critique of the Gotha Programme**, is given here as a supplementary to the fifth chapter of "The State and Revolution". This is the second last; there is one more chapter of Lenin's book to be sent out in this series.

In this case, our introduction can largely come from Great Lenin himself. Writing of the "withering away of the state", Lenin begins by making a distinction between the "polemical" and the "positive" parts of Marx's text:

"Marx explains this question most thoroughly in his Critique of the Gotha Programme. The polemical part of

this remarkable work, which contains a criticism of Lassalleanism, has, so to speak, overshadowed its positive part, namely, the analysis of the connection between the development of communism and the withering away of the state."

Lenin takes the "theory of development" as a given, fixed and firm. We as CU may question this finality, using Ron Press's essay, "[New Tools for Marxists](#)". But Lenin writes:

"The whole theory of Marx is the application of the theory of development - in its most consistent, complete, considered and pithy form - to modern capitalism. Naturally, Marx was faced with the problem of applying this theory both to the forthcoming collapse of capitalism and to the future development of future communism."

Lenin quotes the following from Marx:

*"Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary **dictatorship of the proletariat**."*

Referring to the late-19th to early 20th century period of legal, constitutional democracy in Germany, Lenin says:

"during this period the Social-Democrats were able to achieve far more than in other countries in the way of "utilizing legality", and organized a larger proportion of

the workers into a political party than anywhere else in the world."

But then asks:

"What is this largest proportion of politically conscious and active wage slaves that has so far been recorded in capitalist society? One million members of the Social-Democratic Party - out of 15,000,000 wage-workers! Three million organized in trade unions - out of 15,000,000!"

For Lenin at this revolutionary moment the numbers are crucial. The proportion of workers organised, compared to the whole, is crucial. So it is with us in South Africa today. Democratisation means organising. The National Democratic Revolution is a practical job of organising people into democratic structures.

A further practical job is the management of society, where, as Lenin says:

"In the Critique of the Gotha Programme, Marx goes into detail to disprove Lassalle's idea that under socialism the worker will receive the "undiminished" or "full product of his labor". Marx shows that from the whole of the social labor of society there must be deducted a reserve fund, a fund for the expansion of production, a fund for the replacement of the "wear and tear" of machinery, and so on. Then, from the means of consumption must be deducted a fund for administrative expenses, for schools, hospitals, old people's homes, and so on. Instead of

Lassalle's hazy, obscure, general phrase ("the full product of his labor to the worker"), Marx makes a sober estimate of exactly how socialist society will have to manage its affairs."

This is a point for the advocates of nationalisation to ponder.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Critique of the Gotha Programme, Karl Marx, 1875.](#)
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